



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

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January 10, 2007

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members
FROM: Craig McLaughlin, Executive Director
SUBJECT: PREVIEW OF 2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Background and Summary

The purpose of this agenda item is to update the Board about the 2007 legislative session, a 105-day session that began January 8. It is intended to provide some context for the next agenda item, the proposed adoption of a Board Statement on Possible Legislative Issues for the 2007 session.

The Board heard a very short preliminary discussion of the 2007 session during its December meeting. The information provided in that briefing has held up fairly well, although much of it was, and remains, speculative. The most significant development since the last meeting was the December 19 release of Governor Christine Gregoire's proposed budget. In addition, a few bills were pre-filed and in some cases we have had access to drafts.

The discussion section of this memo describes some highlights of the Governor's budget and some specific bills that are being drafted, have already been filed, or in some case are still only rumored. The information in this memo was current as of the end of last week.

I have asked a representative from the Department of Health (DOH) Office of Policy, Legislative, and Constituent Relations, to join me for this presentation.

Recommended Board Action

None.

Discussion

Committees: There has been some reorganization of committees. The House Health Care Committee is now Health Care & Wellness. The House has also established a Select Committee on Environmental Health. This committee is likely to look early on at issues related to children's exposure to environmental toxins and school environmental health and safety. Brad Avy, a former DOH employee with a wastewater management background, will staff the committee. The House Select Committee on Hood Canal has become the Select Committee on Puget Sound.

Governor Gregoire's budget: Governor Gregoire released her proposed budget for 2007–09 on December 19. She proposes to spend slightly less than \$30 billion. Slightly more than \$600 million would be left in reserves, about half of which would go into a rainy day fund called the "Budget Stabilization Account." The Governor's top priorities are education, economic development, and health care. These are reflected in her budget proposal, with education leading the way.

Enhancements related to public health include:

- \$50 million for replenishing the Tobacco Prevention and Control Account, which was due to run dry.
- \$26.2 million increase for universal vaccine purchasing, mostly to add rotavirus and human papillomavirus.
- \$48 million to continue funding local health (what we often hear referred to as the I-695 "backfill").
- \$10 million in new money to public health, mostly locals, primarily for communicable disease investigations, but also for promoting healthy lifestyles (this is what the Governor picked up from the \$100 million proposed by the Joint Select Committee on Public Health Financing).
- \$4 million to DOH for Puget Sound cleanup—this includes money to help local jurisdictions implement septic management plans.
- \$30.8 million to enroll an additional 32,000 kids in government health insurance programs.
- \$15.8 million to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for pediatric services.
- \$2.2 million to train providers in the medical home model of care delivery.
- \$5.1 million for addressing sexually transmitted diseases.
- \$1.4 million for a DSHS pilot program to provide "health navigators" to help racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities obtain quality care.
- \$20.1 million for community-based mental health and chemical dependency services for people who are not eligible for Medicaid.
- \$442,000 to help families better understand health care issues (health literacy).
- \$3 million to the Hood Canal Coordinating Council for grants that would be used to fix or replace failing septic systems.
- \$1.5 million to expand the reduced-price school breakfast program for low-income students.

Policy issues: Issues the Legislature may take up related to the Board's work include:

- Developing a plan for testing, reporting, and treating of sexually transmitted diseases and bloodborne infections in correctional facilities (pre-filed as HB 1003).
- Phasing out the use of polybrominated diphenyl ethers, or PBDEs (pre-filed as HB 1024 by request of Department of Ecology).
- Safe storage of firearms (pre-filed as HB 1014)
- Consolidating regulatory authority for large onsite systems (DOH request).
- Implementing the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on Public Health Financing (both funding and accountability).
- Legislative mandates to require vaccines for school entry (e.g., human papillomavirus).
- Comprehensive bill on children's health, which would expand access to insurance, promote the medical home model of care, and establish expectations around nutrition and physical activity standards in schools.
- Establishing a statewide School Health Advisory Council and funding councils at the school district level (discussion draft circulated).
- Requiring DOH rule making for body piercing and body art (similar to last year's HB 2335).
- Encouraging a medical home for all children.
- Allowing more "bare bones" health insurance offerings (individual rating, few mandates).
- Additional funding for the small business partnership to supplement health insurance.